

Stakeholder Group

State Assessment of Forest Resources (SAFR)

Notes for July 14, 2009 meeting

Member Attendees

- Steve Kimball – Idaho Department of Lands (co-lead); National Fire Plan Coordinator
- David Stephenson – Idaho Department of Lands (co-lead); Urban Interface/Planning Prog. Mgr.
- Ara Andrea – Idaho Department of Lands, Service & Regulatory Program Manager; NRCS State Technical Committee Representative
- Oscar Baumhoff – Idaho Forest Stewardship Advisory Committee, Chair
- Scott Bell – US Forest Service, State & Private Forestry
- Dayle Bennett – US Forest Service Region 4; Forest Health Protection Group Leader
- Mike Bowman – Idaho Community Forestry Advisory Council
- G. Kirk David – Idaho Forest Owners Association, UI Extension
- Craig Glazer – Idaho Panhandle National Forest; Deputy Forest Fire Management Officer
- Jeff Handel – Idaho Department of Parks & Recreation
- Bob Helmer – Idaho Department of Lands; Forest Management Bureau Chief
- Tom Herron – Idaho Department of Environmental Quality;
- Carol Randall – Idaho Panhandle National Forest; Entomologist
- Greg Servheen – Idaho Department of Fish and Game; Wildlife Program Coordinator
- Bob Unnasch – The Nature Conservancy; Director of Science
- Ed Warner – Idaho Department of Lands; Idaho Forest Legacy Program Manager
- Steve Winward – US Forest Service Region 4; GIS Specialist

Staff Attendees:

- Chris Clay – Idaho Department of Lands; GIS/Cartography Program Manager
- Craig Foss – Idaho Department of Lands; Chief, Bureau of Forestry Assistance
- Peg Polichio – US Forest Service Regions 1 & 4, State & Private Forestry; Program Manager
- Mary Coelho – Western Forestry Leadership Coalition, Program Manager
- Tom Eckberg – Idaho Department of Lands; Forest Health Resource Specialist
- Mary Fritz – Idaho Department of Lands; Planning and Development Specialist
- Suzie Jude – Idaho Department of Lands; Forest Stewardship Program Data Coordinator
- Meghan Lonneker – Idaho Department of Lands; GIS Analyst
- Andrew Mock – Idaho Department of Lands; GIS Analyst

WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS – Steve Kimball

Steve reviewed the meeting agenda. The group will review priority issues previously identified for Idaho, discuss draft map products and gather feedback. Following the review, the group will discuss the state response plan. Steve asked everyone during the review to keep in mind whether or not maps/layers draw the right picture in terms of Idaho's threats and benefits.

REVIEW OF SAFR METHODOLOGY

Dave Stephenson provided the group a handout detailing Idaho's draft SAFR issues, discussion, data, methodologies and maps. Dave asked the group to consider whether there are any issues the group missed or methodologies done differently and if the members are willing to move forward and approve the assessment work done to date.

Dave provided a review of the 2008 Farm Bill language, the three national Redesign themes, and the SAFR goal (to identify and prioritize issues important in Idaho). Dave gave background on utilization by GIS staff of 30 meter resolution data sets, identifying issues exclusive of ownership, and considering activities for meaningful outcomes at the landscape level. The assessment is not meant to be policy, overly detailed, nor include all issues for all stakeholders. It is intended to provide for the "big picture." The approach should be simple and focus on major drivers and issues for forests in the state. While regional issues should be identified, none were found by Core Group team. Dave reviewed the brainstorming process to date, first with the Multi-Agency Group in Summer 2008 identifying priority issues for competitive funding of potential projects. These priority issues were then brought to the SAFR stakeholder group for additional brainstorming. From there, a Core Group guidance team met three times to further refine the issues, describe them, and post results to IDL internet for stakeholder review. Dave discussed the SAFR methodology that focuses on forest threats and benefits, weighting for specific issues, but an overall equal weighting. Once the composite threats and composite benefits are decided on, it is the intent to add them together and produce a draft final map.

THREATS TO FOREST HEALTH

Dave reviewed the approach used to identify forest health threats. The Core Group sought input and recommendations on forest health threats from Carol Randall, US Forest Service Entomologist, and Tom Eckberg, Idaho Department of Lands Forest Health Resource Specialist. Sub-issues identified in this layer include invasive plant threats, damaging insect threats, forest disease threats, and climate change threats. Forest pests and diseases included Balsam Woolly Adelgid, White Pine Blister Rust, Mountain Pine Beetle, and Tussock Moth. For the noxious weeds sub-issue, 57 species were identified on a percent coverage basis showing relative abundance. Also, habitat changes for three keystone forest tree species from Rehfeldt's climate change model were identified for the climate change sub-issue. Andrew Mock noted that the Mountain Pine Beetle layer did not include Wilderness areas are not flown in the annual aerial detection survey.

Steve Winward asked if the noxious weed data set includes USFS ownership.

Greg Servheen commented on forest health symptoms vs. causes and asked if the Core Group differentiated these in their approach. Andrew Mock commented that many of the SAFR issues are interrelated within the assessment and, looking at the assessment as a whole, these will settle out.

Dayle Bennett commented (on the forest health layers) that a better approach to determine risk would be to look at stand conditions relative to forest pests rather than their presence (through aerial survey). Dayle asked if the Core Group looked at stand susceptibility. Andrew said the forest health layers

included spread rate for Mountain Pine Beetle on a watershed level. Discussion followed –if statewide coverage of susceptibility data is available, a second look would be in order.

Action item: Review 30-meter susceptibility map/data availability through Dayle Bennett –Dayle will be in contact with Dave Stephenson by Monday, July 20th).

Action item: Steve Winward will contact Doug Sorenson and the Idaho Department of Agriculture to confirm noxious weed layer includes USFS ownership. **Follow-up:** After some checking during the lunch break, Steve determined that the Idaho Department of Agriculture data does include USFS ownership.

The group reviewed the draft final forest health threats map. Steve Kimball commented that on a recent visit to Island Park, he noted many trees are dying due forest pests, yet this area doesn't show up on draft final map. Ara Andrea confirmed that she witnessed the same conditions in Island Park and Yellowstone Park areas. Dave explained that these areas may not rise to the high priority level if they are only one threat element of the many elements within the map. Discussion followed about weighting individual (or perhaps all) forest pest areas rated high on the final forest health threat map. Andrew commented that only Mountain Pine Beetle should be weighted higher on the final forest health map because the other forest health pests are mapped on a watershed level. Dayle Bennett commented on first drafts of data layers; he now sees that aerial detection survey maps are not part of the draft final layers. Ara commented that maintaining data layer integrity for work projects in the future is important.

Action item: Dave Stephenson and the R1/R4 forest health team will revisit weighting of the Mountain Pine Beetle issue by the end of July.

WILDFIRE IMPACTS

Dave Stephenson discussed the Core Group approach of selecting the relative risk to communities data set for this layer. Discussion followed about fine fuels and low risk rating. Andrew explained that high risk was attributed to areas around communities, but that masking will remove the high risk layer around communities as it focuses on forest areas. Chris Clay asked if the FRCC layer would be more appropriate –there is a 30 meter layer. Meghan confirmed this, however, the core group decided not to use. Further discussion followed that FRCC is more recent than one used. This issue has two questions: threats to human communities and threats to natural communities. These two sub-issues should inform the final wildfire layer/map. This will be helpful when looking at project issues for a particular area.

Bin List: Should two sub-issue datasets be utilized for this layer? Core Group members will discuss – Chris Clay, Craig Glazier, Steve Kimball, Meghan Lonneker – by conference call before July 31.

Steve Winward asked if the relative risk to communities data layer is a WUI layer. Meghan explained it has three main layers that include wildfire risk, burn probability, slope, aspect, etc.

DEVELOPMENT & RECREATION PRESSURE

Dave gave background for issue, data used and the draft data layer map. High risk areas blossom out from communities for development risk. Recreation pressure data was created by IDL staff (Chris Clay). Final map discussed. Greg Servheen asked about out-of-state ORV's. Chris Clay explained that registration data was obtained from both Spokane County in Washington state and Logan/Ogden areas in Utah. Discussion followed about non-forested areas—they will be masked out, but the group will discuss this later in the meeting.

WILDLIFE & BIODIVERSITY

Dave Stephenson discussed fish layer, Comprehensive Wildlife Conservation Strategy (CWCS) focal areas and big game habitat, priority conservation areas (eco-regional conservation assessments from TNC), federally listed species (T&E), and weighting for the draft final map. Greg Servheen commented the focus is only on wilderness areas and weighting might not be right. Scott Bell questioned if the TNC layer duplicates other layers. Bob Unnasch explained that there may be overlap in CWCS, big game, T&E – rare communities and matrix natural vegetation communities was their focus for setting priorities – process different. Greg Servheen asked about the scale on streams. Andrew Mock explained streams were buffered 75 meters. Meghan Lonneker explained there's no overlap between fish and streams – fish removed from T&E. Also, StreamNET was used where there may have been some overlap. Greg Servheen and Scott Bell are okay— there was no double counting.

ACTION ITEM: Continue working with Gregg Servheen and Bob Unnasch to reconsider how best to characterize this issue. Among sub-issues to consider are: where potential investments of resources will best help conserve, protect or enhance critical areas for biodiversity and/or habitat, where restoration activities may best enhance habitats or critical areas, and where projects may best help address economic issues such as hunting and fishing opportunities.

WATER QUALITY & QUANTITY

Dave Stephenson reviewed sub-issues for this layer – PDWS (ground and surface), Spokane Valley Rathdrum Prairie Aquifer, and priority watersheds (where streams are impaired and can benefit from forest management). Tom Herron commented there is a good parallel between streams on 303(d) and TMDL list. However, 303(d) may come and go within 3 years, but the TMDL list can go on for 15 years. Forests not necessarily the only benefit to streams but there is some linkage. Tom would like to see use of TMDL list in the assessment. Dave asked if the TMDL designation will be beneficial to the assessment if the life of the SAFR is 5 years. Tom responded that it would.

ACTION ITEM: Consider incorporating TMDL list into dataset - Tom Herron will coordinate with Andrew Mock.

Dave explained that impervious surfaces from NLCD dataset selected any % greater than 18% in this layer.

AIR QUALITY

Dave reported that the datasets utilized for this issue include non-attainment areas, smoke impact zones and impervious surfaces (VOC breakdown) from NLCD 2001. The final draft map focuses on areas where there are people.

SUSTAINABLE FOREST-BASED MARKETS

Dave reported that the disappearance of forest products markets is larger than what assessment will be used for. Therefore, it is necessary to focus on where there are existing markets (mills and existing and planned biomass facility locations) and their proximity to forested areas to feed them. The data layer focuses on the size of mills, as well as travel time analysis. Scott Bell commented this analysis focuses around existing industry but what about areas that are underserved or may go offline in the future? Dave explained that the Core Group decided the assessment should focus on existing markets and focus

on areas where there will be biomass available and facilities to utilize the material. The classifications on final map are broken into travel times, not natural breaks.

WESTERN FOREST LEADERSHIP COALITION COMMENTS

Dana Coelho, WFLC Program Director, reported the membership hired full-time two-year position to assist states with SAFR. Duties for position have changed to concentrate less on GIS and more on communication and lessons learned between the states and federal agency. The position has not been filled yet. There is a need for a roll-up of western state SAFR analysis to supplement the story to be told. The position will help with collaboration and linkage between states and facilitate processes.

Dana has started to compile information from states about the status of SAFR and response plans. She asked if there were any additional needs for the new position. Travel needs will depend upon what individual state needs are, but face-to-face is helpful and of interest.

Scott Bell asked about Communications Group for Idaho's SAFR within and without the stakeholder group. This will be discussed today. There is a need for organizational representatives to spread the word once a draft is developed to get additional feedback.

COMMENTS ON THREAT AND BENEFIT MAPS

The group discussed scores for the composite threat and benefit layers/maps—they are not additive. For a geographic location to be a priority area, the score must be high or moderate-high in both the threat layer and benefit layer. This is not a typical approach for most state assessments. Discussion followed about the composite map and cancelling benefits among additive layers. Dave Stephenson stressed that the SAFR will ask where are forested areas that can benefit very specific issues such as the highest benefits or values for wildlife, water, air, etc. Greg Servheen commented wildlife issues have more subtleties than just forests. Dave responded that the analysis will provide a snapshot in time, but the information behind it will tell where to address a particular issue for maximum benefit.

Discussion followed about the final composite map based on 6th level HUC. Steve Winward suggests structuring a layer and/or report that shows what the underlying values are as they relate to individual issues within individual HUCs.

Bin List: The group will revisit the need for an underlying value/issue report when determining project work under the state response plan.

LUNCH BREAK

Discussion continued regarding the draft final map—Dave Stephenson explained that it is not meant to show everywhere in the state where there are priorities, but where we, as a group or individually, can work to make meaningful changes to the forested landscape.

Dave Stephenson inquired if there were any issues not included in SAFR that should be. Discussion followed about other economic benefits (recreation, hunting and fishing, esthetics, ecosystem services) not incorporated into the assessment. Dave reported there's no spatial data available to incorporate these issues into this layer, but they will be addressed in the assessment write-up. Hunting units were discussed, and there was agreement these very large areas posed differentiation problems. Past meeting discussions have focused on areas around human populations, but little or no data was available to spatially display. Steve Winward suggested taking OHV data and translating into dollars per

day, or perhaps the hunting data in the same manner. Further discussion followed on the importance of including the economic value of recreation in some way, as well as carbon credit data in the future. Steve Kimball commented these items will be addressed in the narrative—lots of recreation/ education is dispersed. It may be beyond the purview of the assessment to create data to include these issues. Steve Winward commented that the assessment needs to balance issues like recreation that can be a threat, but also a benefit. Dave Stephenson reported the SAFR isn't trying to capture the economic value of recreation. Dave asked if the assessment should provide recreation potential as a benefit. Tom Herron commented that the economic benefit from recreation can be a bridge between threat and benefit sides of this issue. He suggested that we weight the economic benefit to outlying areas vs. proximity to populated areas. Bob Helmer commented about discussions early on in the SAFR process about recreation threats and using grant monies to mitigate or eliminate effects from OHV's. Greg Servheen will pursue how this issue might be presented geospatially; at a minimum, it will be addressed in the narrative report. Discussion followed regarding the SAFR timeline so far—meeting minutes have been published online, feedback requested and received. The stakeholder group must now draw the line on pursuing additional data, unless missing data is of a critical nature to the assessment. The group agreed to address future data needs when the assessment is redone in future. The stakeholder group will look ahead to the next round of SAFR development, especially in terms of carbon credits in the future.

Steve Winward and Scott Bell commented they like what has been developed so far. They spoke with the Idaho Department of Agriculture during the lunch break and they all like the noxious weeds dataset. This Action Item will be taken off the list.

DRAFT FINAL MAPS

Dave Stephenson explained that the medium and dark red areas represent priority areas. Some adjustments were made to the original matrix that changed the draft final map very little. Masked areas include wilderness areas (dark green) and areas where precipitation is less than 10" (light green), with urban areas "punched" through. Dave explained that any area that does not get a minimum of 10 inches of precipitation will not support (natural) tree growth. This will be different for urban areas where irrigation is available.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

Chris Clay commented on the dichotomy between benefits and individual sub-issues, i.e. water quality – find where conditions are bad (impaired streams?) and where forests can help mitigate; on the other hand, wildlife prefer areas where things are great—forests can also enhance and benefit where things are great. Andrew Mock commented that T&E species and fish show only where species are left and not necessarily their historic range. If you took the same approach as water quality, one would look to areas where (fish) habitat does not exist.

Dave Stephenson asked the group to consider if limited resources were available (for project work), where would you utilize them? Do we need to rethink this for wildlife issue? Greg Servheen commented that areas where there are good resources and management are also areas where we can do good work. The composite benefit map shows where the best wildlife habitat is good. Ara commented that she looks at the wildlife areas as areas to be protected, but not necessarily restored or extended. These are areas with no risk relative to the wildlife side. Discussion followed on where can we do work on issues to get the greatest benefit through conservation easements, etc. Greg Servheen commented that he sees disparity on the wildlife habitat issue and questions why wilderness areas are

excluded from the final analysis. Andrew Mock commented that the Core Group at one time talked about adding wild and scenic rivers, did not ultimately include them. Chris Clay asked would it not be better to include stream and uplands in the fish layers. Meghan Lonneker responded that we could but the results flag the ¾ths of the state. Andrew reported that zonal statistics—when the majority of HUC is selected, it brings the entire HUC to that level. Andrew and Meghan reported that the fish layer is not “washed out” in the composite layer, and by bringing fish up to a HUC level, you over estimate and end up flagging the whole state. Are we at an impasse? Dave commented that CWCS looks at hundreds of species, but asked how to address management activities and/or projects with limited funds. Greg Servheen commented on protection and restoration strategies within CWCS which are missing from the SAFR.

Ara commented that small parts of the SAFR layers have been used in competitive grants already and that SAFR maps help narrate where we will best focus limited funds and application efforts— it is not a broad stroke effort.

Greg responded to the question of how he would redo the effort for wildlife that he would approach it in the context of other benefits and how they were calculated. Any decision is two prong— where you go and don’t go areas. Dave disagrees that we have to explain why we are not going to some places to do project work. He asked where F&G and conservation groups think efforts should go for on-the-ground forestry-related projects.

Action item: Greg Servheen will take another look at the Wildlife and Biodiversity data layers to see if they can further enhance/refine, or if SAFR should use as is. Timeline: next week Greg and others will have a better idea how long this will take to review/refine.

Idaho is close to finishing up SAFR and may have a draft final map by August.

Kirk David commented on draft final composite map-- he likes option 2 and the logic is clear.

FOLLOW-UP & FURTHER COMMUNICATIONS ONCE SAFR COMPLETE

Idaho’s SAFR has been a ‘messy’ process so far—we don’t want to complicate it unnecessarily. Later when draft final map is completed, we will prepare website that details the progression of issue identification, data availability, draft data layer development, and gathering additional comments. Idaho should be careful what information we ask for—ask interested parties to focus on the big picture and see if there are any fatal flaws in the composite maps (like the Island Park example). A small (Communication) sub-committee will get together to work on this aspect of SAFR. Bob Helmer commented on the difficulties of getting this out to the general public so that it is easily understood. The main focus of the communication should be federal, tribal, local government, and state partners. Steve Winward commented that this outreach can help facilitate or frustrate partnership efforts.

ACTION ITEM: Steve Kimball will gather the (Communication) sub-committee to work on communication efforts by July 31st.

ADDITIONAL FEEDBACK ON SAFR PROCESS TO DATE

Stakeholders commented on the process and how it can be improved. Bob Helmer commented he thought is worked fine as is. Carol Randall commented she likes ‘parking lot’ (bin items) for future SAFR effort(s). Andrew Mock commented on the people-oriented (population) issues focus. Chris Clay commented that the Core Group working with GIS staff was helpful and suggested this continue. Steve

Kimball commented there was some difficulty with the decision-making process when things were decided on Core Group level and then brought back to the larger Stakeholder Group, i.e. additional time was spent rehashing issues/decisions. Ara suggested use of the IDL website as a good place to understand what core group has struggled with and emphasized that it's good idea to read information posted there before the meeting so time is not wasted.

Craig Foss provided an overview about last year's effort to get to where we are now and where we need to be by June 2010 with the state response plan.

Steve Kimball thanked attendees for their commitment and participation within the limited time frame for the assessment.

RESOURCE / RESPONSE STRATEGY

Discussion followed regarding the long term comprehensive, coordinated strategy for investing state and federal funding, as well as leverage partner resources, to address the management and landscape priorities identified in its assessment. The response strategy will include monitoring and reporting of outcomes. The response strategy will incorporate existing statewide plans that include wildlife action plans, CWPPs, and address existing S&PF program planning requirements.

The group reviewed the proposed time line to complete the response strategy by June 2010. The structure and composition of working group will remain the same as assessment. Ara Andrea commented that SAFR and the response strategy will take place of the Forest Stewardship, Forest Legacy, and Urban & Community Forestry statewide program plans and will need to have the appropriate committee member participation. Scott Bell commented on response strategy for IDL and NIPF, but would like to see additional participation by other state, federal and tribal staff including forest supervisors and/or deputy forest supervisors. Scott will work with Peg Polichio and Andy Bruneel to coordinate this activity. Bob Helmer reported that he will stay involved with the response strategy. A follow-up meeting for SAFR and response strategy is scheduled for Wednesday, August 26th, depending on meeting room availability. The NIFC conference room worked well in Boise for this meeting. Steve Kimball asked participants to let him know if they think additional folks should attend send. State advisory committee participants will attend after the next SAFR meeting.

MEETING ADJOURNED 2:15 p.m.

Prepared by Suzie Jude